

Minutes of Public Works Committee Tuesday, December 1, 2009

Present: Steve Braun (Chair), Mike Cann, Rob Crowner, Guilford Mooring (Superintendent, DPW), Don George. Walter Wolnick and Rob Cusner, visitors.

1. Administrative

Minutes of Nov. 10, 2009 meeting accepted (4-0).

Next meeting set for: Tuesday, January 5, 2010, 7:00.

2. New Business

Rt. 116 repaving update.

Rob Cusner, president of the Norwottuck Rail Trail and frequent advocate for bicycle-related issues, asked whether a bike lane will be included in the expected re-paving of Route 116 south from Amherst College. He noted that Route 116 is a major north/south travel corridor, and that good bike lanes exist from Amherst college north to Pine St., but not south along the stretch expected to be paved. He says the roadway is plenty wide enough to accommodate a bike lane, with the exception, perhaps of a stretch in the vicinity of Shay Street. He emphatically requested that a bike lane be added where possible given the width available.

Guilford responded that the repaving work is a “book job” with state rules that are complex and limiting in terms of how much the roadway or plans for repaving can be changed at this point. He said that if his department requested a bike lane, that there would have to be widening of the approximately 500-foot stretch around Shay Street, and that that would require, in turn, a great number of new cross-section design drawings and other details of planning that would delay the project and put the funding at risk.

He agreed that, aside from the Shay St. section, the roadway was wide enough for a 4-foot-wide bike lane. He said that although a bike lane could not be “installed” during the repaving, his goal is to re-stripe the road for a bike lane in the sections that are wide enough after the project is completed and the state-mandated rules are no longer in effect. He said that existing drainage “swales” on the edge of the road in places will be removed, which will effectively add a bit of useable surface for a bike lane.

Rob Crowner noted that a section of 116 between Longmeadow and Potwine has no curb and that sand builds up in that section, posing a hazard to bicyclists. Guilford said there used to be a curb there, but it was taken out 10 years ago. The current plan is to put a curb back in, as well as adding curbs (of the high asphalt type) in some additional areas that are now missing curbs. In

response to questions about whether the curbs could be changed, he noted that, again, he is limited by state standards.

Old Business:

Sidewalk plowing.

Guilford reviewed the issue of plowing sidewalks (see previous month's meeting minutes for more details). He noted that it isn't feasible to plow all 61 miles of sidewalks in town because that would require 2 new machines (at roughly \$55,000 each) and would cost approximately \$12,5000 per storm. Nor is it feasible for DPW workers to shovel downtown sidewalks because this must be largely done by hand. He then laid out three options:

Option 1: plow only sidewalks next to town property. This would be 5.25 miles of sidewalks, and would take about 3.5 hrs. to clear, for a total estimated cost of \$896 per snow storm (4-6 inches of snow).

Option 2: Plow sidewalks in Option 1 plus sidewalks connecting the various parcels (this represents the existing sidewalk plowing strategy). This would be 24.6 miles of sidewalk and costs about \$1800 per storm.

Option 3: Plow the sidewalks in Option 2 with the addition of a select number of sidewalks along streets with high levels of vehicular or pedestrian traffic. This would be roughly 31 miles of sidewalks and would cost about \$2500 per storm (i.e. \$700 more than Option 2).

The committee discussed the options at length. There was general agreement that basing the town's sidewalk plowing policy on the logic of plowing roads leading to and from town-owned parcels, as well as plowing sidewalks along roads with high levels of vehicular or pedestrian traffic makes sense and would be more rational and defensible than the current strategy, which includes a few streets on which town property no longer exists, and does *not* include some streets that ought to be added from a public safety standpoint.

The committee reviewed a list of streets for possible inclusion in town sidewalk plowing.

After a motion was drafted orally and discussed, it was agreed that it would be better to have the motion put into writing and circulated for more careful deliberation. Mr. Braun agreed to draft a motion, circulate it, and bring a revised version to the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Steve Braun, Sec'y pro tem.